

## **The Personal and Employment Characteristics of Staff Nurses in North Carolina**

### **Findings from the 2001 Survey of Staff Nurses in North Carolina**

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When the public thinks of nurses, they usually base the image on those nurses that spend the majority of their time providing hands-on care to patients in their homes, hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, or physician offices: staff nurses. All LPNs and approximately 60% of the RNs licensed in North Carolina are employed in staff nurse positions,<sup>i</sup> according to data published by the North Carolina Board of Nursing on their web site in January, 2002. These nurses are the backbone of healthcare in North Carolina. They provide patients with the care they need, and act as advocates for their patients within the healthcare arena. This report provides an overview of who those nurses are in terms of their personal characteristics and their employment status.

This report is part of a larger study of staff nurses that explores their feelings about their work environments and their plans for staying in or leaving the workforce. During the summer of 2001, the North Carolina Center for Nursing surveyed staff nurses licensed and employed in North Carolina. Both RN and LPN staff nurses were randomly selected from the three geographic regions of the state<sup>ii</sup> based on their home address in the license renewal files maintained by the North Carolina Board of Nursing as of April 1, 2001. A total of 713 usable surveys were returned for an overall response rate of 63%.<sup>iii</sup> The tables in this report focus on the personal and work characteristics of staff nurses in North Carolina. Additional reports will be made available that explore other topics covered by the study.

To meet the definition of staff nurses used in this study, the respondents must have been employed in nursing at the time they completed the survey, providing direct patient care as part of their nursing position, and employed in the following kinds of position: staff nurse / general duty nurse, office nurse, home care nurse, or charge nurse / team leader. However, they could be employed in any type of setting (see Table 9).

The profile of staff nurses in North Carolina presented in this document is based on the characteristics of those nurses that responded to our survey during the summer of 2001. The survey data was compared to similar data elements available in the 2000 RN and LPN license renewal files in order to determine how well the survey respondents represent the population of staff nurses in the state. The results of the bias analysis revealed that the racial composition of the LPN survey respondents matches that of the population of LPN staff nurses in the state, but that a slightly higher percentage of RN survey respondents were white than in the population of RN staff nurses in the state. However, the percentage difference was less than 4%. The gender distribution of RN survey respondents was similar to the population of staff RNs, but missing data on the gender item for LPN survey respondents resulted in a lower reported percentage of males than that in the population of LPN staff nurses, although the proportion of females was similar. There were also some minor differences in the proportion of LPNs employed in part